

Record of Categorical Exclusion Determination

Removal of ash trees within Prince George's County, MD to the eradicate the infestation of emerald ash borer - addendum

Brief History and Description of Proposed Action:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has established emerald ash borer (EAB) regulations (7 CFR § 301.53) and is proposing to fund the removal of ash trees within and around the infested area of Prince George's County, Maryland, in order to contain and eradicate the pest. In 2006, EAB larvae were detected in ash trees located in the Clinton/Brandywine area of southern Prince George's County, Maryland. The larvae were discovered during an ongoing survey begun after the initial detection of the insect in Maryland in 2003. USDA and Maryland have implemented quarantines to prevent the artificial spread of EAB within the State. In 2007, APHIS provided funding to the Maryland Department of Agriculture for the removal of ash trees within a 1.5-mile radius of infested trees within Prince George's County. This is an area of approximately 13,714 acres around Clinton and Brandywine, Maryland. An estimated 25,000 ash trees, all potential hosts of EAB, are being cut and chipped. The majority of these trees are small, with almost 72% being less than one inch in diameter measured at breast height. The removal of the potential host trees within this area should prevent the spread of EAB and eradicate it from Maryland. Stumps remaining on private land, residential property, or next to roads will be removed by grinding. Stumps remaining in forested areas will be treated using Garlon 3A (triclopyr). Each stump will be treated once by hand with a backpack sprayer, in accordance with the product label. This action was previously documented in a Record of Categorical Exclusion Determination dated December 21, 2006.

With the onset of spring, some ash whips (tree seedlings) have begun to grow in the treatment area. APHIS is proposing to continue its support of the Maryland Department of Agriculture with the additional removal of the young ash trees in the same treatment area. The trees are all less than one inch in diameter, and will be cut by hand with loppers or pruning tools. After cutting, the remaining stump will be treated once by hand with Roundup (glyphosate), in accordance with the product label. Without this additional action, the young ash trees could provide a refuge for any EAB that might have survived the initial tree-removal and chipping processes. This action is important, though not sensitive, controversial, or precedent setting.

Number and Title of Categorical Exclusion Applied:

This proposed action falls within the class of actions which have been subject to categorical exclusion under APHIS' National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures, in 7 CFR § 372.5 (c)(1). The APHIS NEPA regulation that defines a categorical exclusion appropriate to this action under section 372.5(c) is:

“(1)(i) Routine measures such as . . . removals, sanitizing, inoculations, control, and monitoring employed by agency programs to pursue their missions and functions.”

The use of the registered herbicide (Roundup) is permitted as a routine measure according to the categorical exclusion implementing procedures, provided that:

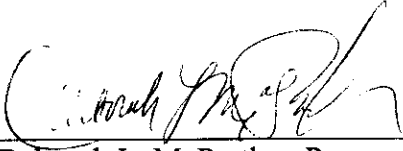
- “(A) The use is localized or contained in areas where humans are not likely to be exposed, and is limited in terms of quantity, i.e., individualized dosages and remedies;
- (B) The use will not cause contaminants to enter water bodies, including wetlands;
- (C) The use does not adversely affect any federally protected species or critical habitat; and
- (D) The use does not cause bioaccumulation.”

The treatment area is localized, as it is defined as a radius around the currently small area of known detections in Prince George’s County, MD (currently about 13,714 acres.) Humans are not likely to be exposed, since the treatments will be applied by hand and in forested areas. Residential and private land will not be treated with the herbicide. The application by hand will prevent the direct exposure of any water to the herbicide. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources previously indicated that there are no known records of any state-listed or federally-listed species that will be impacted by the proposed project. The Material Safety Data Sheet indicates that no significant bioaccumulation is expected.

The proposed action will not result in significant adverse impacts; there are no extraordinary circumstances which might affect the significance of any potential impacts, and there are no cumulative impacts with other related actions that might result in significant adverse impacts. This proposed action is necessary to prevent the spread of emerald ash borer to noninfested areas of the United States and to eradicate the insect from the state of Maryland. To the extent that this action restricts the spread of emerald ash borer and should eradicate it from Maryland, it is anticipated that this action will result in more protection of the human environment.

Determination:

Based upon my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class of actions, that the regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and that the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.


Deborah L. McPartlan, Program Manager
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07/19/07
Date